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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/019,650	01/03/2002	Haruko Toyoshima	0445-0316P	9924
2292	7590	03/15/2004	EXAMINER	
BIRCH STEWART KOLASCH & BIRCH PO BOX 747 FALLS CHURCH, VA 22040-0747			KIDWELL, MICHELE M	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3761	70
DATE MAILED: 03/15/2004				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/019,650	TOYOSHIMA ET AL.
	Examiner Michele Kidwell	Art Unit 3761

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 08 January 2004.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-6 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1-6 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____. | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____. |

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 1 – 2 and 6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Yoshioka (US 6,156,023)

With respect to claim 1, Yoshioka discloses an absorbent article which is provided with a liquid permeable surface sheet (2), a liquid impermeable leakage-prevention sheet (3) and a liquid-retaining absorbent formed substantially oblong (4), and is providing on longitudinal opposite sides thereof with a pair of right and left elastic member-carrying three-dimensional guards (figure 2), wherein the three-dimensional guards each as a skin contacting surface portion (figure 3) formed by folding back a side on a free side towards the outer side of the absorbent article, and said elastic members are respectively disposed and fixed to said skin-contacting surface portion and to an approximately width widthwise central portion of a raised portion between the skin contacting surface portion and a base end of the three dimensional guard as set forth in figure 3.

As to claim 2, Yoshioka discloses an absorbent article wherein a total width of the elastic member disposed on the skin contacting surface portion (24B, 24C, 24A) is larger than a total width of the elastic member disposed on the raised portion (30) as set forth in figure 3.

With reference to claim 6, Yoshioka discloses an absorbent article wherein the skin contacting surface is folded back along the elastic member at a part of the location of the elastic member nearest the raised portion as set forth in figure 3.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 3 – 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yoshioka (US 6,156,023).

The difference between Yoshioka and claim 3 is the provision that a ratio between W1 and W2 is 0.1 – 1.0.

The examiner contends that this limitation is inherently met by the Yoshioka reference. Any portion of the skin contacting surface portion (large or small) may be considered W1 and any width of the raised portion may be considered W2. Therefore, the routine experimentation of these portions/widths may be measured to ultimately yield the claimed limitation.

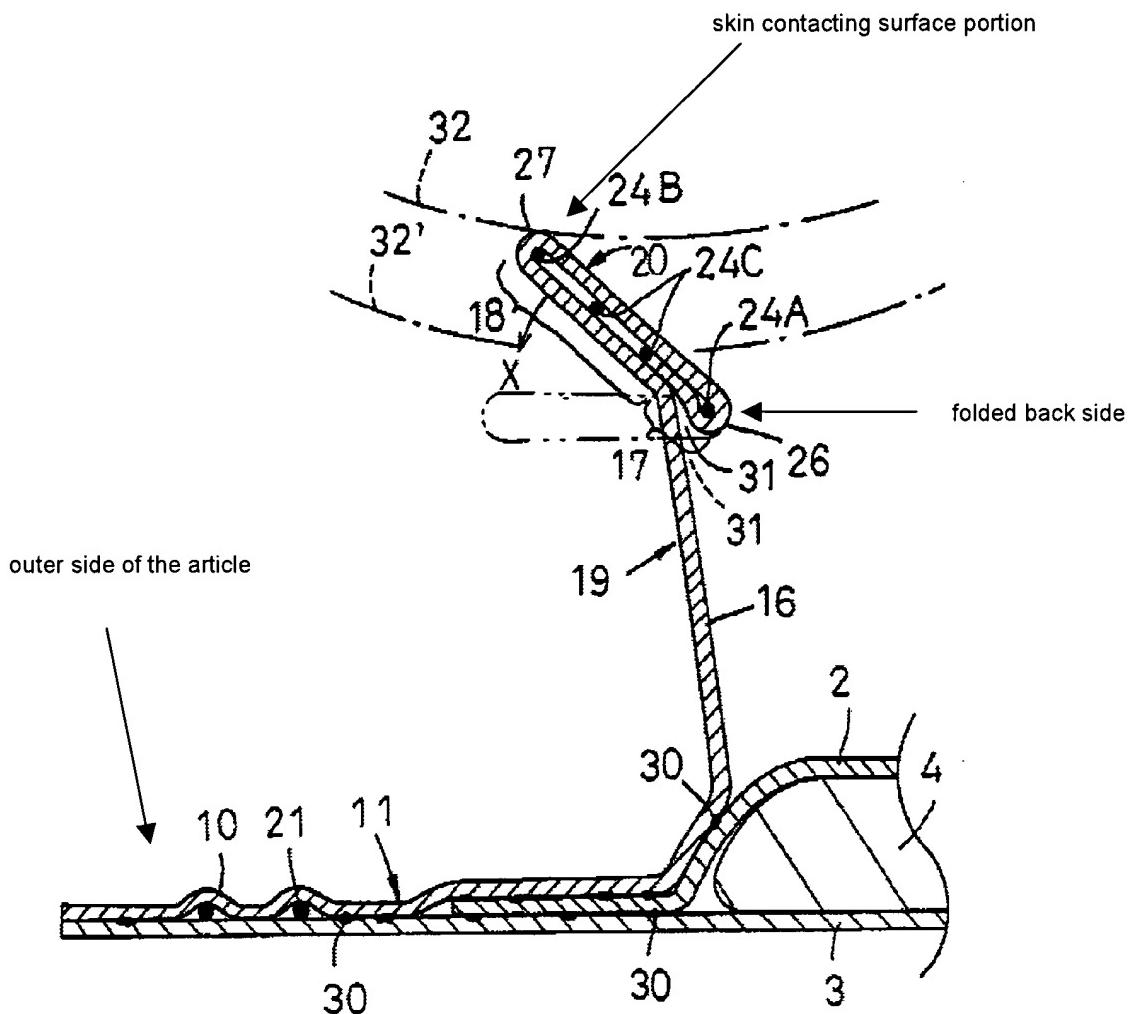
With reference to claim 4, the examiner contends that Yoshioka inherently meets the claimed limitations because the applicant states that the portion having the larger elastic members will allow for the larger stress (page 7, lines 14 – 17 of the applicant's specification). Therefore, since Yoshioka provides larger or more elastic members on the skin contacting portion (24B, 24C, 24A), then the skin contacting portion will have a stress larger than the raised portion as claimed.

With respect to claim 5, see the rejection of claim 4. Any portion of the area designated 11 may be considered a leg portion having no leg gather. If the raised portion is bisected, the lower half (which is considered the area above reference numeral 16 in figure 3) will have a larger stress than the upper half portion (the area beneath reference numeral 16 in figure 3) for the same reasons listed above.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed January 8, 2004 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

In response to the applicant's argument that Yoshioka does not provide for an absorbent member having a skin-contacting surface portion formed by folding back a side on a free side towards the outer side of the absorbent article, the examiner disagrees and refers to figure 3 shown below.



Regarding the applicant's argument that the three-dimensional guard of Yoshioka is not formed by folding, the applicant is reminded that:

"[E]ven though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is

unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process." *In re Thorpe*, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985) (citations omitted)

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michele Kidwell whose telephone number is 703-305-2941. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday, 7:30am - 4:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Calvert can be reached on 703-305-1025. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Art Unit: 3761

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Michele Kidwell
Michele Kidwell
March 12, 2004


JOHN S. CALVERT
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3700